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"Behold, I make all things new." REV. XX. 5.
"As in Heaven so in Earth." LUKE XI. 2.

Heaven in Easter.

by
Ernest Warburton Shurtless.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



HEAVEN IN EASTER.

BY

ERNEST WARBURTON SHURTLEFF.

... "Thou shalt thus find Heaven in Easter, and
if crosses weigh thee down,
It shall only be that kneeling thou shalt
better take thy crown" ...

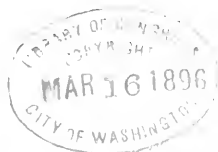
"AS IN HEAVEN, SO ON EARTH."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

LOUIS MEYNELE.



BOSTON, U. S. A.
L. PRANG & COMPANY.



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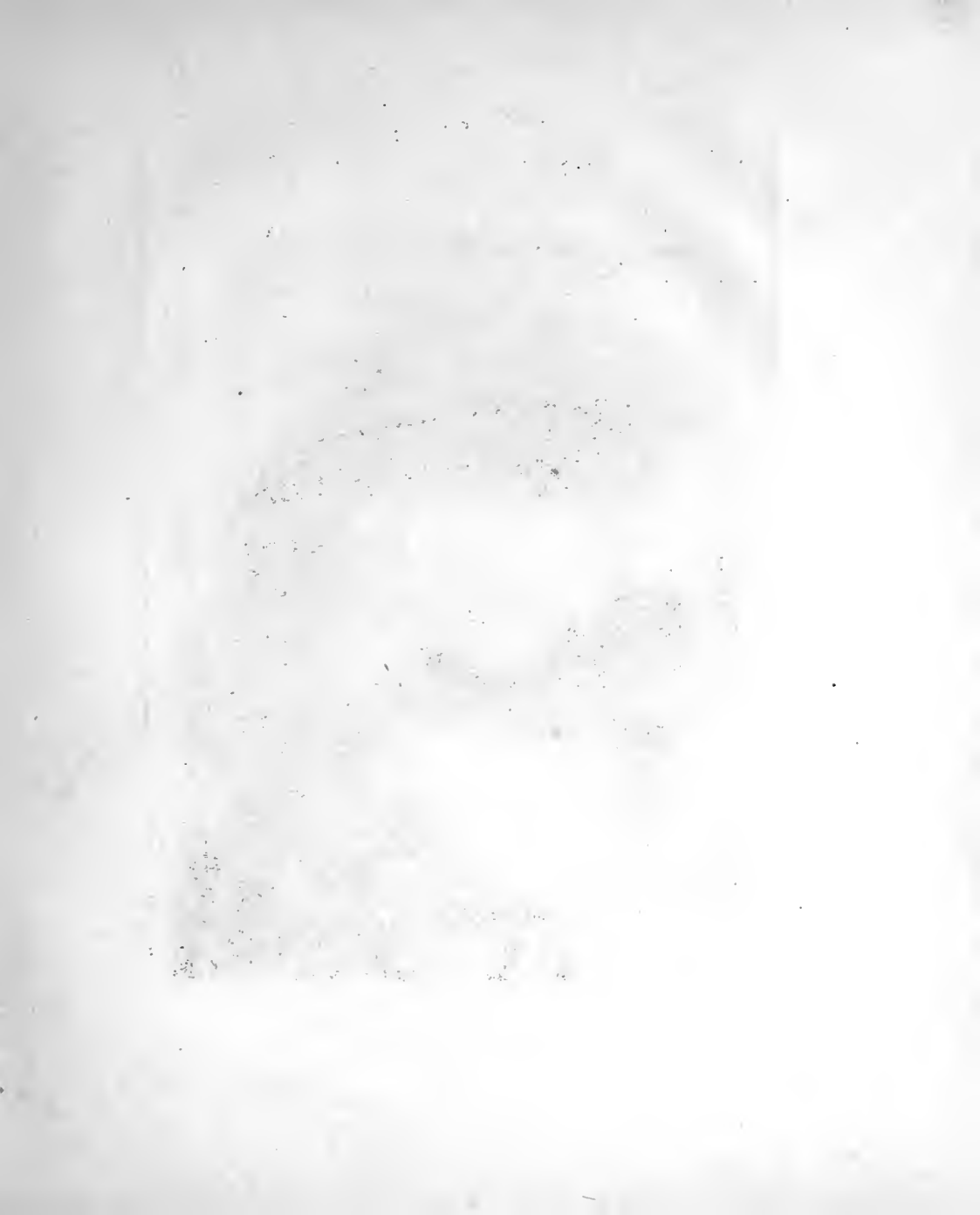
The three sermons in verse, "Easter in Heaven," "Heaven in Easter," and "The Shadow of the Angel," published by L. Prang & Co., were intended only for the congregation before which they were first delivered; but the kindly requests of many who heard them have led the author to submit them to a wider field.

Having been written during the pressing duties of a large parish, and with no thought of their appearance in the present form, they are sent forth with no expectation of literary recognition, but with the simple hope that they may bear some measure of comfort to such hearts as are pleased to receive them.

If their influence be but as the humble flight of a butterfly over a little child's grave, leading some grieving mother to look up, they will have received the highest tribute that is craved.

CHURCH OF THE PILGRIMAGE,
PLYMOUTH, MASS.,
Jan. 14, 1895.







"Soft as touch of swallows' pinions
When in evening skies they meet."

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HEAVEN IN EASTER.

“BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW.”—REV. xxi-5. “AS IN HEAVEN, SO IN EARTH.”—LUKE xi-2.

Have you heard that lovely legend that was writ to comfort man,
Of the tomb of Tansein, minstrel in the courts of Akbar Khan?—
From that tomb a tree uprising bloomed above the city's throng,
And whoever ate its blossoms won the magic gift of song,
And like Tansein, chief musician, breathed in melodies so sweet
That the passing throngs, enraptured, hushed their footsteps in the street.
But methinks a tree more wond'rous bursts today to glorious bloom,—
'Tis the tree of Life Immortal rising o'er the Saviour's tomb :
Sweetly through its flowering branches Easter's gentle breezes blow,
Wafting down the tender blossoms o'er the graves of earth below ;
And the griefs of men are covered with the petals of its love,
Every flower a living witness of the risen life above ;
And whoever plucks a blossom, o'er his heart in faith to wear,
Reads the hope of life eternal, in its open calyx fair.
And the song of Christ within him, like a chord of rapturous peace,
Heals his spirit with a music giving every grief surcease :
And a voice seems breathing softly from the over-arching skies,—
“From your griefs, arise my children ! From your doubts and griefs arise !
Let no past, however mournful, hide the future's smile from view ;—
Leave your buried past behind you and arise with hope anew !”



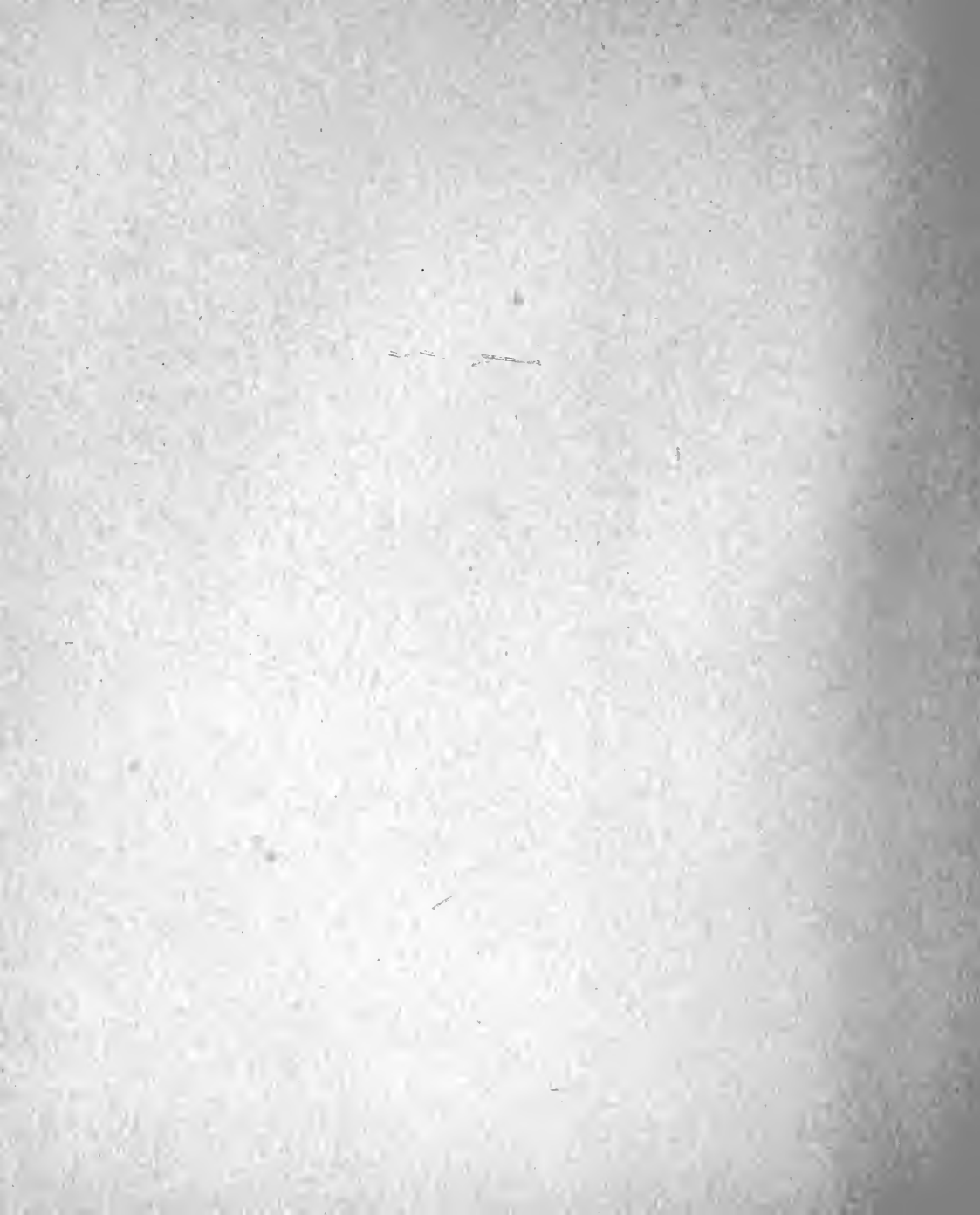
Even Nature seems to listen, from her budding fields and bowers,
And repeats the tender message in the breath of rising flowers,
And the earth puts on new graces, and her spirit seems consoled
For the death of last year's flowers, by the sunlight's touch of gold,
And no more she greets the morning veiled in snow to hide her tears,
But she buries all past sorrows 'neath the hopes of future years ;
And she knows that gracious heaven has new joys to give today,
Like the angels of the pleasures that have lately passed away :
And the hills grow mild and pleasant, touched with soft and living green,
And the brooks like living lyrics, glide the sunny slopes between,
While the violets so trustful of the Heavenly Father's care,
Bloom almost before the touches of the frost have left the air.
Earth looks up with smile of comfort at the gentle wind's caress,
All the Winter's grief forgotten in the Easter's loveliness.
Think, O heart, how wild, how dreary would the stricken Earth become
If she summoned not new beauty after Winter's icy gloom !
Think how desolate her highways, if she bid the storms remain,—
Nature sad and hopeless, never taking heart to bloom again.
Yet 'tis so with man ; how often after sorrow's storm has passed
Does his spirit hold the echo of the moaning of the blast !—
Does he linger in the shadow that the cross of grief has made,
All unmindful of the beauty of the light that casts the shade !
Wearing still the sackcloth garment strewn with ashes of his pain,
When he might arise like Nature, and be clothed with hope again.
Oh behold him, crushed with grieving, cling to some poor yesterday,
When the Future, like an angel, shows the morrow's better way !—
Deeming God hath not a garment yet to give that may compare



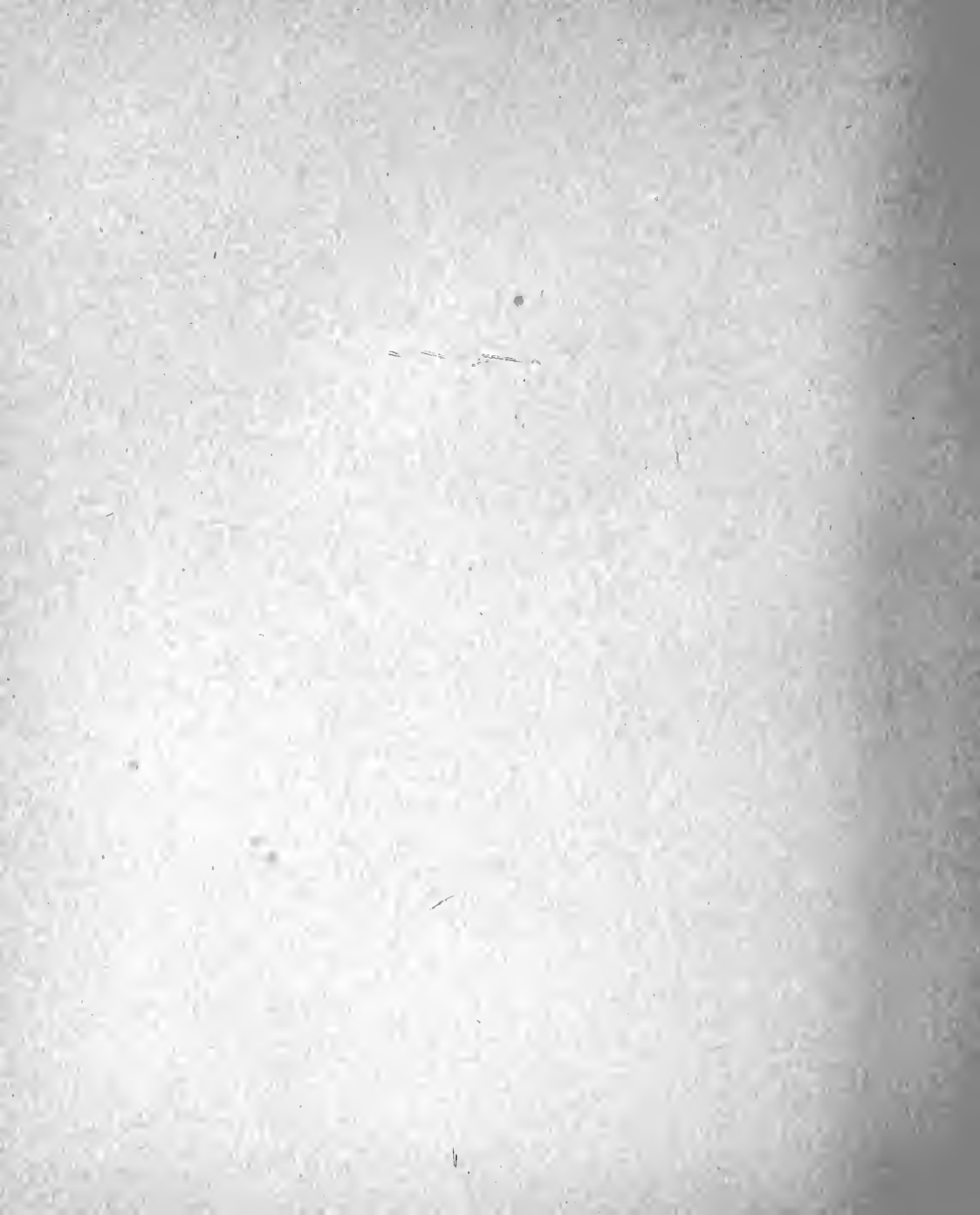
With the poor grief-tattered raiment he has learned with tears to wear !
Art *thou* clinging so, beloved, to some earthly grief or wrong?
Or to some dark sin, still cherished, though its blight has shamed thee long?
Shall the flower revive in beauty, and thou show no new-born grace?
Shall the dumb earth smile to heaven and the cloud still hide thy face?
Wilt thou still live in the darkness of thy sorrow or thy sin
When the light of Easter greets thee, gently waiting to shine in?
Deck thyself, O soul, with newness ! put a holier garment on !
Lift thine eyes to heavenly pleasures if the earthly joys are gone !
Thus, reflected in thy spirit shall the grace of Easter lie,
As in quiet lakes reflected glows the light of morning's sky ;
And the tree of Life Immortal, on the grave of thy dead Past
Heaven's blossom of forgiveness with the flower of hope shall cast.

Hark ! the Easter birds are singing ! What have they of hope to teach ?
This,—to put an Easter sweetness in the accents of thy speech ;
For remember in thy speaking that the lightly uttered words,
When they leave the nest of silence, fly away like full-winged birds ;
Never more shalt thou recall them, they are gone on rapid wing,
Bearing forth to other spirits songs they learned of thee to sing.

Thou canst not atone by sorrow for the song Hate's bird hath sung,
Though it sank its cruel talons, when it left, in thine own tongue :
But its voice may yet be softened by the songs of kindlier birds ;
Send them forth then, plumed with mercy : put a newness in thy words.
Let thy words not jar together ; let their touch be light and sweet,
Soft as touch of swallows' pinions when in evening skies they meet.



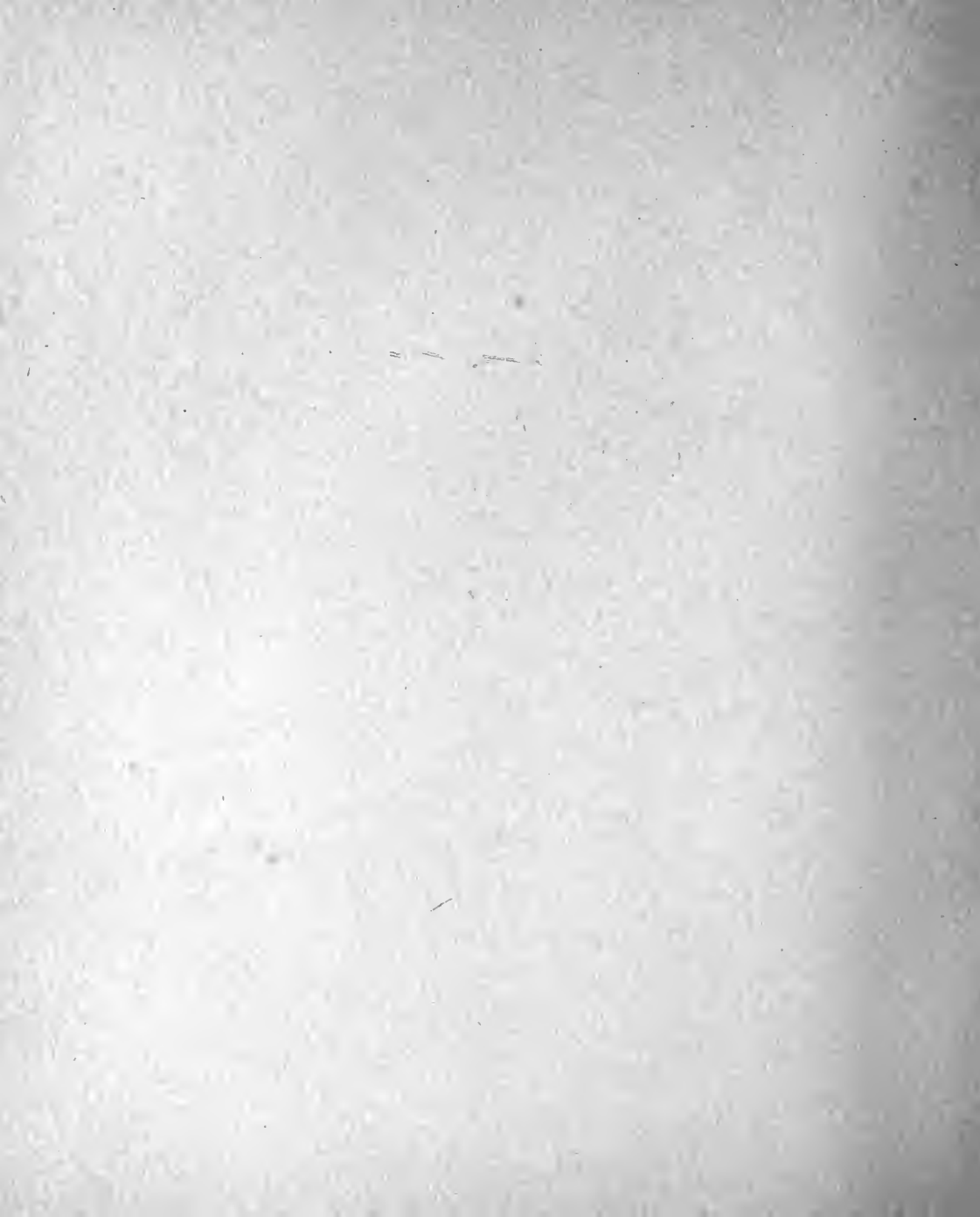
Let them breathe a pleasant mildness such as thou thyself wouldst hear
If in heaven it chanced their echoes might return to thine own ear.
Let thy words fall with forgiveness, like the dews from evening skies,
From a charity whose heaven pities all that 'neath it lies,—
On the tares and wheat together that in others' harvests grow,
Coarsest weed, or tenderest flower ; for the Christ hath spoken so.
And remember, thou hast also something yet to be forgiven ;
There are none who quite are angels on this earthly side of heaven.
Put a newness on at Easter ; speak thou cold and harsh no more ;
Let thy speech in gentle ripples break the calm of thought's hushed shore.
Silence oft more apt than speaking soothes the strife that threatens ill :
Oft the spirit speaks the loudest when the faltering lips are still.
Silence oft is sweetest answer ; make no haste to break its charm :
Think not peace is on thy waters till the deeps within are calm.
Think how souls converse in Heaven ; be thy converse so on earth.
Put on gentleness of speaking as a part of thy new birth.
As the wind today is softer than the Winter's tempests wild,
So do thou, in modulation, make the uttered thought more mild.
Rule thy spirit, and thy language will a Christlike goodness teach ;
Keep thy heart kind, and its fountains will o'erflow in kindly speech.
Wound no more the lives around thee with complainings roughly spoken ;
Strongest heart that braves life's battle may by thoughtless word be broken.
Speak those words that when remembered give sweet charm to after hours,
Memory singing as she gathers from the past her fadeless flowers.
Then shall be no vain regretting over some dear, lonely mound,
Of the word that might have fallen with a touch of kindlier sound ;—
Then shall be no vain regretting, and no penitential tear,





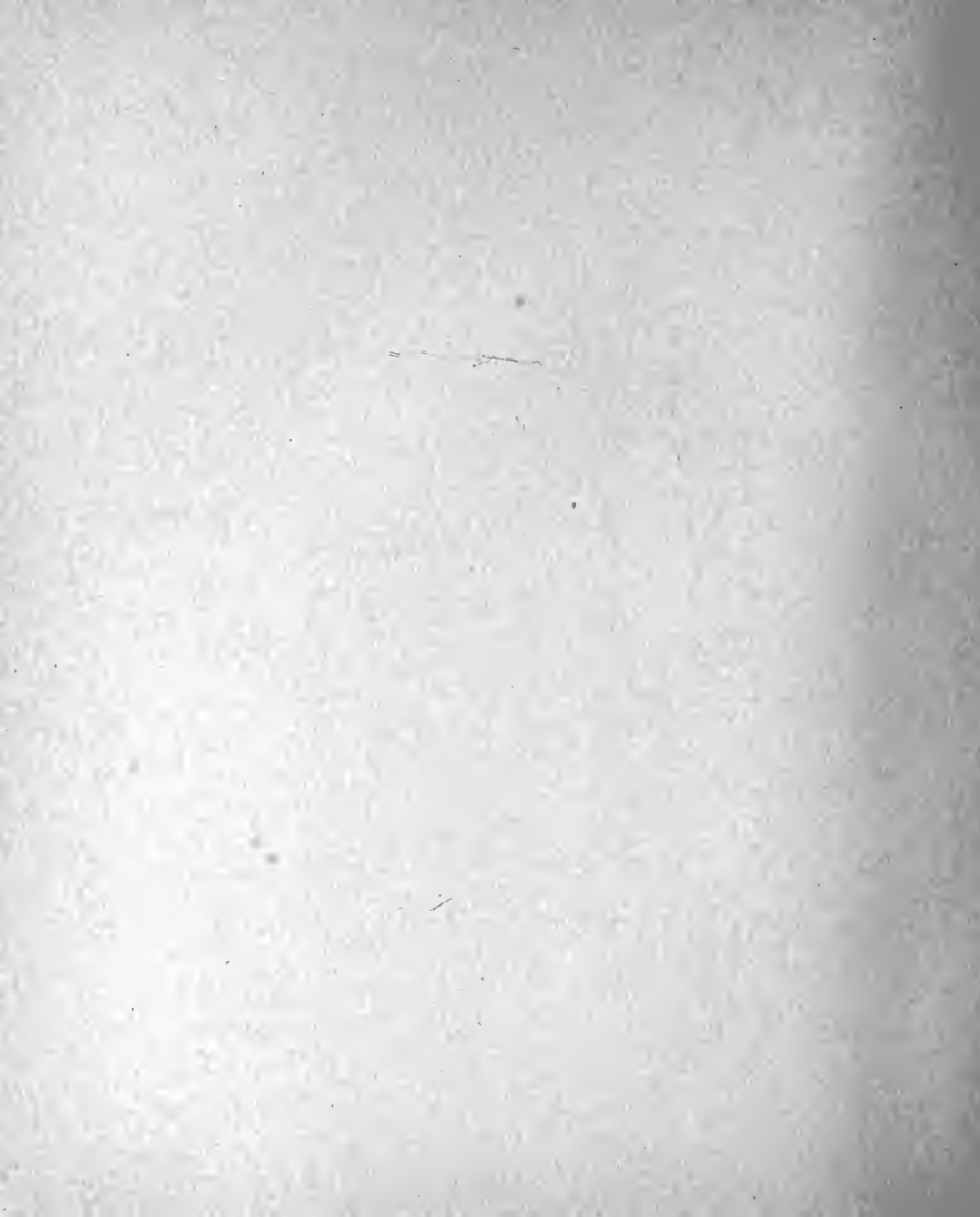
" And the lilies bring their lesson. See how pure and fair they rise ! "

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When death silences all speaking and thy loved no longer hear.
Speak each word as in God's hearing ; thou shalt speak more gently so,
And the language of the angels shall be heard on earth below ;
But if thou hast failed, already, past recall of grief or sighs,
Know thy loved look down from Heaven with forgiveness in their eyes,
Asking only that the kindness, now so ready to atone,
Fall on other hearts as gently as it would upon their own.

And the lilies bring their lesson. See how pure and fair they rise !—
Pure enough are they to blossom in some garden of the skies ;
Pure enough on Christ's own bosom with their stainless snow to rest,—
Gentle emblems of the spirit dwelling ever in His breast.
Be thy heart thus pure within thee ; dress thy soul for Heaven anew ;
Christ's dear tears have mourned thy sinning—let them cleanse thy heart like dew—
Dew that bathes the dusty flower, leaving every petal fair—
Till no stain or sign remaining tells the taint that rested there.
So thy life shall be a temple, and thy heart a worthy shrine
Where the holy light of Heaven through the darkest hour shall shine.
And the peace within thy conscience shall to life new joy impart,—
Thou shalt know the Master's meaning,—“Blessed are the pure in heart” ;
For thine eyes shall see God, feasting on the glory of His grace ;
And the world shall know thy spirit by the thought that marks thy face.
Leave the old life then, so joyless, with its deadly shame and gloom,
Let the new life, like a lily, rise and blossom from its tomb.
Think how all the saints in Heaven walk in white of righteousness ;
Pure and spotless is their vesture, and their spirits are no less.
Never there one thought unholy clouds their view of Christ's fair face ;



Live thou so on earth, beloved, and 'twill be a heavenly place.
Start today the heavenly journey, faithful till its course is o'er,
Darkness of the world behind thee, Heaven's increasing light before—
So live that if death should call thee in life's dawn or in its even,
Thou wouldst be already standing at thy Father's House in Heaven.

Yet again, let Easter's message turn to holier life thy deeds.
Dost thou sorrow? Christlike service heals the broken heart that bleeds.
Let us not with idle grieving breathe the sainted names of love,—
Names of those who from our dwelling went to God's own home above.
If our saints, from Heaven beholding, gaze in pity on our loss,
Surely not with joy they witness how we faint beneath the cross ;
Sure that cross must cast its shadow on the brightness of their bliss,
If that fair world can be saddened by the griefs that darken this :
True we cannot still the sorrow where the parting leaves such night ;
True the heart must mourn their absence, though they went to Heaven's light ;
But does sorrow grow most sacred in the hour we sorest weep?
Is our hopeless grief a token that our faith is strong and deep?
Do the loved ones prize our sorrow for the jewels of our tears?
And does Heaven measure feeling by the sigh of pain it hears?
Listen ! There's a nobler lesson that from Heaven at Easter comes
Like a strain of holy music stealing through our earthly homes,
And it teaches that a solace to our sorrow shall be given,
If we do on earth such service as our loved would choose in Heaven ;
So we take this dearest mission from the hands stretched down to ours,
And a smile breaks through our weeping like a rainbow through the showers.



When thou grievest for the loved one, from the earthly dwelling led
To that high, eternal Kingdom from whose bourne all pain has fled,
Bid thy troubled heart remember what on earth her spirit wrought,
What the virtues were she cherished, what the charity she taught ;
And the mantle of that goodness to thyself in honor take,
Bearing on the holy mission in her name and for her sake ;
So between your kindred spirits even death shall dare not stand,—
Thou on earth, thy saint in Heaven, yet shall labor hand in hand.
Art thou faithful? She rejoices,—thou hast made her spirit glad,
In thy work thou still art with her and thy task shall not be sad.
Was not this the Christ's high lesson, when He said, if thou wilt take
But the cup of cooling water in My name and for My sake,
And refresh the humblest brother that hath kinship in My blood,
Thou shalt have reward in Heaven,—was not this the Saviour's word?

From the deadness of past grieving, rise then, unto life anew !
Do each day what fancy pictures those in Heaven would have thee do
Go heal other hearts that sorrow, go make other lives more fair :
Then shalt thou thyself grow stronger for the cross thou hast to bear.
Wilt thou heed the simple lesson and its mission early take?
Lo ! thy saint shall smile from Heaven that thou livest for her sake.
Rise then, in the joyous newness of this purpose brave and strong ;
Make thine own life's consecration part of Easter's joyous song.
Life shall then take on new beauty with the budding hills and skies,
Till the wintry tree of sorrow blossoms sweet to Heaven's eyes,
Thou shalt thus find *Heaven in Easter* ; and if crosses weigh thee down,
It shall only be that kneeling thou shalt better take thy crown.





“‘He is risen!’ cry the angels.”



Easter ! look then on the picture of the risen Lord Divine !
Look ! the early sun is rising on the hills of Palestine ;
Joseph's rock-hewn tomb is empty ; lo ! its stone is rolled away !
Angels' footprints mark the garden 'round the place where Jesus lay ;
Angels' voices break the silence, angels' faces light the air,
While the heart of Mary, mourning, seeks the Saviour's body there.
"He is risen !" cry the angels ; "He is risen !" smiles the morn.
"He is risen !" breathe the flowers, fresh with dews of day new-born.
Hark ! He comes ! I hear His footsteps ! Not the gardener but the King—
He whose gardens are our spirits with His goodness blossoming.
Know you not that face, O Mary?—and that voice, divinely sweet?
Aye, with eager cry of gladness, Mary worships at His feet :
Not the dead Lord, still and shrouded, but the Risen Lord instead !—
Oh, to think she sought the living in the chambers of the dead !
In her life new faith awakened ; in her thought new morning broke ;
In her *heart* her Lord was risen ! in her *soul* her Saviour spoke !
It was Easter in her spirit, calm and sweet and full of light ;
Heaven dropped its shining mantle, like the day, upon her night.

Hush, O heart ! again 'tis Easter ; Christ the Risen Lord draws near !
HE IS RISEN in our spirits. Aye, the Risen Christ is here.
Hast thou thought thy Lord was buried in thy doubt's poor rock-sealed tomb?
Lo ! the stone is moved ! His footsteps through love's garden towards thee come
He will help thee to the newness of the life thy soul desires ;
He will light again hope's altars with his own celestial fires.
Hast thou thought thy Lord was buried in the tomb of thy poor grief?
Lo ! the stone is moved ! He calls thee, and His voice shall bring relief.



He will help thee in the service done on earth for Heaven's sake ;
He will daily stand beside thee and thy duty blessed make.
Hast thou thought thy Lord was buried in the dark tomb of thy sin?
Lo ! the stone is moved ! Behold Him, and a holier life begin.
He will help thine erring spirit, and thine heart within make pure.
Though thou fallest He will hold thee, and His patience will endure.
There is now no tomb for Jesus in the whole earth's wide domain,—
Human hearts are now His Kingdom and eternal is His reign.

Bloom then, tree of Life Immortal, rising over Jesus' tomb !
On the graves of all our sorrows shower down thine Easter bloom !
Hiding all man's anxious grievings 'neath the mantle of God's love,
Teaching lives that wait in darkness hope still hath its light above.
Aye, upon all drooping spirits, drop the blooming sweetness down.
Let all bowed heads wear thy blossoms—type of life's immortal crown.
Give us Heaven in our Easter, peace for trouble, hope for fears,
Light for darkness, trust for doubting, truth for error, smiles for tears.
And do Thou, O risen Saviour, walk with us Thy chosen way
Till our gladdened spirits enter Heaven's eternal Easter Day !

